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and have been abandoned by them, the feeble remnants of the past still linger in the customs of the people mechanically, without their knowing their meaning. Thus, among the Georgians of Megrelia, a woman has no right to kill a chicken or any other edible animal. If she does so, the food which she cooks from it will be regarded as unclean and not edible, and if it happens that at the time of the preparation of dinner no male is present in the home, she asks the assistance of a male member of a neighboring family and her request is readily satisfied.

The separation of the woman is especially strict in times of menstruation and child-birth, when they are carefully avoided. But when the woman is in normal state, i. e., outside the times of menstruation and child-birth, she lives at home with the whole family. This normal state of woman is called in Georgian, *sashinao kopa*.

At the time of menstruation the woman, among the Khevsurs, is given the specific name of *nabosari* and the custom of separation is called *bosloba*. During this time she lives in strict seclusion from her community, in a small hut especially built for this purpose and called *samrevlo*, or *bosseli*.[1] The Russian investigator, V. A. Gurko-Kriajin, relates an interesting episode which happened to a Georgian teacher in Khevsuria. "They told us," writes the author,[2] "about the experience of a Georgian who came as a teacher to Khevsuria. When the winter began the inhabitants of the village categorically demanded that his wife must live apart from him, in the *samrevlo*, during her monthly periods. In order to avoid complying with the request, the teacher announced that his wife was expecting a child and therefore had no menstruation, and in the springtime he secretly left the village."

Every village in Khevsuria has a number of *samrevlos*. The families who are rich enough build their own huts. The women of the poor families possess one *samrevlo* jointly. It may occur, although seldom, that the poor women construct the huts themselves, without any help from the men. But generally the *samrevlo* is built by men, who may belong to any community or

[1] Urbneli.
[2] Gurko-Kriajin: 281.

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841 tribe of the Caucasus, but not to the one of the Khevsurs. The Khevsur is forbidden to take part in the construction of a *samrevlo*. This rule is enjoined by the *Khati*, the patron saint of the group. If the rule is violated, the Khevsur believes he will be punished by the *Khati*[1]: his herds and flocks will be killed, his whole property destroyed, and he himself will be driven away.

The samrevlo is a small quadrangular hut, so low that a man cannot stand upright in it. It is built of stones, generally without any mortar, with a low roof of straw or timber and mud, with one small door facing the village and one small hole in the roof serving as a window and also as an outlet for smoke. There is no furniture at all, but just some straw on the earthen floor around the hearth in the center, and a few dishes and a jar for water.

784 The women who occupy a *samrevlo*,[2] or, to use the Georgian
841 expression, who are *samrevloth gasuli*—meaning in English, "gone to the *samrevlo*"—strew charcoal around the hut in order to keep away the evil spirits, who are supposed to be afraid of charcoal.

[278] Incidentally, it should be noted that, because of the magical power which the people ascribe to charcoal, it is used in many instances for medical purposes and as protection against the evil spirits, as in the case of the *samrevlo*.

841 These huts of the menstruating women—the *samrevlos* of the Khevsurs and Pshavs—are situated usually together near a river or brook outside the village, about one mile distant from it. Be-
[844] sides the menstruating women, the women with new-born babies also live in the *samrevlo*. They move from the *kokhi*—the special huts for childbirth—into the *samrevlo* within a few days after delivery.

Among the Svans also, as among the Khevsurs, Pshavs and Tushes, the woman with monthly issue is regarded as highly unclean and her husband does not dare at that time to enter the sanctuary (*Khati*) or to bring a sacrifice to the patron saint of the community, because he himself is regarded as unclean and unworthy in the eyes of the deity. Unlike the Khevsurs, Pshavs and Tushes, the Svans do not build special huts for their menstruating women; and the Tushes, whose country is nearer the civilized

1 [see cat. 116, p. 25 ff. -- Analyst]
2 [i.e. menstrual hut; see cat 116, pp. 91-92 -- Analyst]

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part of Georgia and much easier of access, do not have customs as rigid as those of the Khevsurs and Pshavs. The Tush women with monthly issue do not leave their homes, but instead of a *samrevlo* the Tushes make a special addition to the house for the woman in question.

Not only the person of the menstruating woman is regarded as unclean, but also the place of her stay and all objects which are used by her in the time of separation are unclean, and every contact with them is believed to make a man unclean also. Even to pass by or look in the direction of the place of her stay is believed to be enough to make a man unclean and unfitted to enter the sanctuary, depriving him of the support and protection of the patron saint of the community and making his every enterprise a failure. Consequently it is decreed by custom that before every undertaking the man has to cease intercourse with the woman whose nearness pollutes him, and he must prepare himself in order to be clean by the special rules of abstention and purification.

The best example of this is found in the customs of the Svans. According to their beliefs, hunting is a sacred affair,[3] and consequently a hunter has to live a clean life. He has no right to have intercourse with any strange woman but only with his legitimate wife. Even with his own wife he is obliged to cease these relations one day before the hunting expedition. He may not start on the hunt when someone of his womenfolk has a monthly issue, nor even if any woman in his neighborhood is in a similar condition at the time. The Svans believed that a hunter could be successful on his expedition only if he abstained from sexual intercourse and also avoided the proximity of a mother with a newborn babe until they were purified.[4]

Although the customs regulating the relations with the female sex were strict for every male member of the community, even more was required of the attendants and servants of the sanctuary. Thus the shepherds of the *sakhato* flocks—the flocks of the famous sanctuary, *Thamar mepe,* in Pshavia—who were chosen from the members of the congregation for a certain period of time for the

[3] This subject is described in detail in the chapter dealing with Contract.
[4] Dmitriev: 167.
[See cah. 116, pp 91-92 - - Analyst]